Lambda Letters Project

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and Cultural Exchange
Sacramento, CA
32602

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Life Is Busy at Lambda Letters Central

We thought you might like to read of the many projects that the staff and other volunteers at Lambda Letters are involved in. Here is a rundown of many of those projects.

Lambda Letters has been operating a very busy e-mail alert system. Each month Project staff issue 10 to 15 e-mail alerts about fast-breaking events in the state legislature or Congress. These alerts provide our members with information they need to write to their legislators about the bills being voted on by those legislators. This e-mail alert system has been a major factor in boosting our number of letters delivered to over 63,000 letters in the first six months of this year.

We also have a committee of four who are honing their Internet skills to track the state legislation that our community cares about. Our goal is to begin the new year with the capacity to find and track those bills without the necessity of depending on any outside organizations.

We will of course continue to consult with other groups, but the death of LIFE Lobby is a stark reminder that we need an independent capacity to find and track legislation.

Continued on page 9

Our Place in History

So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

—Corinthians I, 13:13

History is filled with little ironies. Among the most interesting of them is the possibility that the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender community is becoming the moral leaders of this nation.

Consider the following.

Our president admits to being a sexual predator. He, the ultimate boss/supervisor, persuaded a 21-year-old intern to have sex with him during working hours and in the office. What do you think would happen to a supervisor in private industry who did that?

Our governor has built his political career on stirring racial hatreds and distrust and riding them to political victory. Do you really think that his approach to affirmative action and immigrant issues, and his reasons for that approach, really pass the test of high moral standards?

Similarly, many conservative Christian pastors rake the coals of homophobia, hoping that the resulting flames of fear and prejudice will inspire people to send money. Yet we frequently learn of priests or ministers who have stolen church funds, had illicit love affairs, or

Continued on page 10

Also in This Issue:

Appropriations Bill Harmful to PWAs 3
Fighting Transgendered Hate Crimes 3
Stopping Substance Abuse Among Youth 4
Supporting Two Equity Bills 4
State Legislative Update, Part V 5–8
Good News & Bad News from Congress 10
How High Can LLP Go? 11

Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters and E-mail Messages Collected

July, 1998	27,671 letters
In all of 1998	91,094 letters

Dollars Spent

July, 1998	$1,464
In all of 1998	$5,806

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Publication of the name of any person or organization in articles or advertising in the Lambda Letters Project newsletter is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person or organization.

The Lambda Letters Project does not sell or loan its mailing list to anyone. We give no information about who is, or is not, a member of the Project. We do, occasionally, send mailings on behalf of other worthwhile organizations, but this is done by our own volunteers so that no other organization has the opportunity to copy our mailing lists.

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HIV/AIDS Issue

Threatening VA/HUD Appropriations Bill Passes House

by Randy Allgaier,
San Francisco AIDS Foundation

On July 29th the House of Representatives passed two dangerous and far-reaching amendments to the Veterans Affairs/Housing and Urban Development (VA/HUD) appropriations bill. The two amendments, authored by Representative Frank Riggs (R–Calif.) and Van Hilleary (R–Tenn.), have different goals, but in combination would have a devastating effect on people living with HIV/AIDS.

The Riggs Amendment, which passed by two votes, targets San Francisco because of that city's ordinance requiring that organizations contracting with the city offer health benefits to employees' domestic partners. This amendment would strip San Francisco of all federal housing dollars, currently estimated at more than $65 million. The effect on San Francisco would be catastrophic and would cause a ripple effect throughout the state. Additionally, the Riggs Amendment is just one in a series of legislative attacks on the lesbian and gay community that is orchestrated by the radical right.

The Hilleary Amendment, which passed by 31 votes, attempts to roll back a $21 million increase in funding for the Housing Opportunities with AIDS (HOPWA) program by transferring this funding to housing for aging veterans. Despite strong and vocal opposition by VA/HUD Appropriations Subcommittee Chair Jerry Lewis (R–Calif.) and Louis Stokes (D–Ohio), both of whom are veterans, the amendment passed.

Since 1997 there has been a 6 percent decrease in the number of new AIDS cases but a 13 percent increase in the absolute number of people in the United States living with AIDS. Over the past two years, the number of communities qualifying for HOPWA funding has increased by 20 percent, while funding has only increased by 15 percent. With such an increase of demand on the HOPWA program, the $21 million

Continued on page 11

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Issue

Fighting Transgendered Hate Crimes

by Boyce Hinman

Wonderful and astonishing news! A.B. 1999 continues to be approved by large margins. As of the day this article was written, the bill was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee on a vote of ten in favor to one against. It is expected to be approved by the full Senate and sent to the governor for signature after returning to the Assembly for approval of minor revisions made to the bill in the Senate. Now we need for you to write to the governor urging his signature on this important bill.

Lambda Letters has a special relationship to A.B. 1999. We, together with LIFE Lobby, co-sponsored the bill. That is, we approached Sheila Kuehl's office in 1996 and urged her to introduce a transgendered hate crimes bill. Actually our relationship to the bill goes back even further than that. A few years ago, we and our members sent over 900 letters asking Senator Diane Watson to introduce legislation amending California's Hate Crimes Statistics Act. We asked her to add transgendered people to the list of those protected by the act. She was a logical person to ask because she was the one who had previously introduced and gained passage of the Hate Crimes Statistics Act. After initially agreeing to sponsor our bill, Senator Watson changed her mind because she had to concentrate her energies on dealing with welfare reform.

This landmark legislation defines hate crimes against transgendered people and provides that those who commit such acts will face stiff penalties for doing so. Hate crimes get stiffer penalties than non-hate–based violent crimes. Current law provides enhanced punishments for felonies or attempted felonies committed against a person because of the victim's race, color, religion, nationality, country of origin, ancestry, disability, or sexual orientation. This bill adds gender to the list and defines gender to include transgendered people.

Transgendered people remain the most at-risk people in our community, and the most likely to be attacked by hateful people. We need to support them with all our resources. Please write to the governor expressing your support of A.B. 1999.

People of Color Issue

Helping Stop Substance Abuse Among Youth

by Boyce Hinman

For years our nation has depended primarily on a law enforcement model to control the abuse of drugs and alcohol. The approach has largely failed. Even the police admit to that. In a 1996 poll, 60 percent of police chiefs admitted that drug abuse is a growing problem and, in fact, that it is the most serious problem facing their communities.

The burden of the law enforcement approach to substance abuse falls with particular weight on people of color. Many studies have shown that they typically receive harsher sentences than Caucasian offenders charged with the same crime. This results from the fact that people of color, who form a large part of our inner-city populations, are usually prosecuted by city police under state laws that have harsh penalties. Caucasian offenders more often are prosecuted by federal authorities under federal laws that tend to have lighter sentences for the same offenses.

Substance abuse has been rising at an alarming rate, particularly among junior high and high school students. In a survey taken early this year, our members selected anti-drug programs that center on treatment rather than punishment as one of their top five priorities for this year. A.B. 1784 has been introduced by Assemblymember Joe Baca (D–San Bernardino) to do just that.

The purpose of A.B. 1784 is to establish community-based residential and non-residential treatment programs to intervene and treat the problem of alcohol and drugs among youth. It deserves our support. It is a good bill that has made it most of the way through the legislature. At the time this article was written, the bill was awaiting a final vote in the Senate and is expected to be sent to the governor soon. Please write to Governor Wilson asking him to sign this important bill.

Women's Issue

Supporting Two 'Equity' Bills

by Carla Leek

This month we cover two issues that Lambda Letters has supported earlier this year. The first is A.B. 499, the Sex Equity in Education Act (Kuehl, D–Encino), which your letters helped propel through the Assembly in January and through the Senate just a few days ago. The second is A.B. 1112, the Women's Contraception Equity Act (Hertzberg, D–Van Nuys), which Lambda Letters wrote on in May. Both of these bills now await the governor's signature.

A.B. 1112 requires health care service plans that cover prescriptions to also cover prescription contraceptives. It is unfair and fiscally unwise that most health care service plans do not cover prescription contraceptives. According to recent California Department of Health Services advertisements, over 70,000 California teenagers became pregnant last year. Statistics for unintended pregnancies among adult women are harder to compile, but the high cost of contraceptives undoubtedly contributes to thousands of unintended pregnancies every year.

The bill has been amended to appease religious organizations that initially feared they'd be forced to promote contraception. A.B. 1112 now very clearly exempts religious organizations.

A.B. 499 simplifies, clarifies, and strengthens California's commitment to equal opportunity in the public schools. According to the California Education code, "It is the policy of the State of California to afford all persons in public schools, regardless of their sex, ethnic group identification, race, national origin, religion, or mental or physical disability, equal rights and opportunities in the educational institutions of the state."

It is no coincidence that both of these bills include the word "equity" in their titles. For California to compete in the global economy of the 21st century, every child born here must be a wanted child, and those children must have equal opportunity to succeed in the public schools. Please sign the enclosed letter urging Governor Wilson to support both of these important bills and return it to Lambda Letters today!

Legislative Update, Part V

This is the fifth of a series of articles to inform you of the progress of both good and bad bills through our state legislature. We have been successful in moving many of the good bills and stopping some of the bad bills. The flow of your letters and e-mail messages to our state legislature has been much greater than usual this year (91,000 pieces of mail by July 31st) and we think that has something to do with our success in the halls of the state legislature. Thank you for doing your part in our community's effort.

This article was written on August 24th and reflects the status of many of the bills we have been watching and covering as of that date. The final day of the legislative session was August 31st, and any bills not approved by legislators in both houses by that date died. Unfortunately, we had to go to press before the legislature's final bell. We will give you the final update on legislation in our October newsletter.

Here is a list of some of the bills we have been following showing their status as of August 24th.

HIV/AIDS Issues

A.B. 20 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To provide that people living with AIDS, and who return to work, continue to receive Medi-Cal health coverage until they become eligible for health insurance under their employer's plan.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for a final vote in the Senate.

A.B. 1663 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To require the state to conduct studies of unique identifier systems of tracking the spread of HIV that do not require the reporting of the names of people who test positive for HIV.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for a final vote in the Senate.

A.B. 2737 (Dion Aroner, D–Oakland)
Purpose: To create the Supportive Housing Fund to provide housing for homeless and other very low income and disabled persons, including those with AIDS.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for a final vote in the Senate.

A.B. 2762 (Dion Aroner, D–Oakland)
Purpose: To require the state to request a waiver from the federal government to allow the state to use Medi-Cal funds to care for poor HIV-positive people who do not have full-blown AIDS. Currently they must have full-blown AIDS to receive Medi-Cal benefits.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Failed in Senate Appropriations Committee.

S.B. 705 (Richard Rainey, R–Walnut Creek)
Purpose: To criminalize the "intentional" transmission of HIV through unprotected sex.
LLP Position: Oppose.
Status: Passed and sent to the governor for signature or veto.

L/G/B/T Issues

A.B. 1059 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To require that all health insurance companies that offer policies covering employees and their spouses also offer coverage for employees and their domestic partners. Does not require employers to buy coverage for their employees' domestic partners.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed both houses of the Legislature. Pending

Continued on page 6

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Continued from page 5

on the Assembly floor for the Assembly to vote on changes made to the bill in the Senate.

A.B. 1999 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Encino)
Purpose: To amend the states Hate Crimes Statistics Act by adding gender and defining gender to include transgendered people. Provides stiffer penalties for hate motivated crimes based on gender and gender identity. Requires the counting and reporting of such hate crimes.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for a final vote in the Senate. The bill was amended slightly in the Senate Appropriations Committee, so if the bill is approved by the full Senate, it will have to return to the Assembly for their agreement to the changes made in the Senate.

A.B. 2156 (Fred Keeley, D–Santa Cruz)
Purpose: To strengthen the California Labor Code sections that prohibit sexual orientation–based employment discrimination. Increases the deadline for filing a complaint from 30 days to a year. Requires employers to post notices that sexual orientation–based employment discrimination is illegal and to display list of offices at which complaints may be filed.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed and sent to the governor for his signature or veto.

People of Color Issues

A.C.A. 3 (Kevin Murray, D–Culver City)
Purpose: To allow the state to take any measures necessary to enhance equal opportunity in California.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: In Assembly Judiciary Committee. Probably dead.

A.B. 1532 (Kevin Shelley, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To authorize state grants to cities and counties to establish interpreter programs to assist the police in serving non-English-speaking crime victims. Has been changed to add funding for pubic defenders, which dilutes its purpose of helping non-English-speaking crime victims.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Failed in Senate Appropriations Committee.

A.B. 1784 (Joe Baca, D–San Bernardino)
Purpose: To provide $10 million to fund substance abuse programs for adolescents in the ten counties with the most at-risk adolescents.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for a final vote in the Senate.

A.B. 1815 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To exempt certain limited English–proficient students from taking the achievement test, which is given in English, and which is otherwise required by the state.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed and sent to the governor for signature or veto. He has indicated that he is likely to veto the bill.

A.B. 2015 (Roderick Wright, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require school districts to distribute teachers of different experience and credential equitably through all schools in the district.

Continued on page 7

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Legislative Update

Continued from page 6

LLP Position: Support.
Status: Failed in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

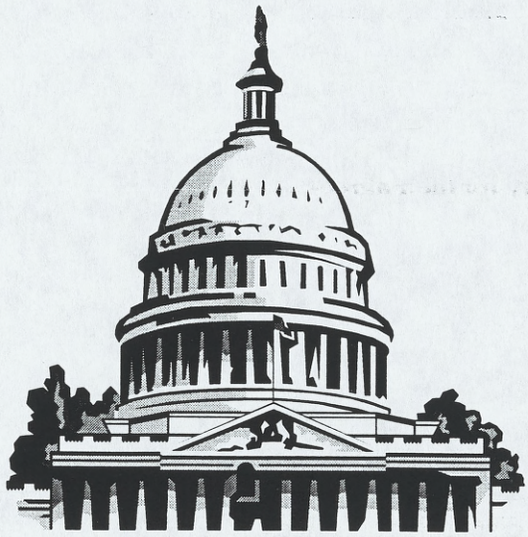
A.B. 2031 (Gilbert Cedillo, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To prevent the governor from denying access of legal resident aliens to many state-funded health programs for the poor.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for a final vote in the Senate. Is in trouble on the Senate floor. The governor opposes the bill.

A.B. 2171 (Antonio Villaraigosa, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To make immigrant children eligible for the Healthy Families state health insurance program, regardless of when they entered the country.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for a final vote in the Senate. The governor opposes the bill.

A.B. 2421 (Mike Honda, D–San Jose)
Purpose: To ensure that all immigrants maintain eligibility for state housing programs. This is essential to keep immigrant families from being evicted or separated from one another.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for a final vote in the Senate.

A.B. 2463 (Antonio Villaraigosa, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To provide state SSI and food stamps to legal immigrants.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Died in Senate Appropriations Committee.

S.B. 34 (John Vasconcellos, D–San Jose)
Purpose: To guarantee that all low-income women, regardless of immigrant status, have access to state prenatal care programs.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed and sent to the governor for signature or veto.



S.B. 1226 (Diane Watson, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To state legislative intent to reduce public dependency by creating new public or community service jobs programs for transitional welfare recipients.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Died in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

S.B. 1398 (Tom Hayden, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To make immigrant children eligible for the Healthy Families state health insurance program regardless of when they entered the country.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Still being held by the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Probably dead, but there is a slim chance that the committee may yet approve it in time.

S.B. 1500 (Richard Polanco, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To outlaw the manufacture, import, sale, possession or loaning of unsafe guns.

Continued on page 8

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Legislative Update

Continued from page 7

LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for a final vote in the Assembly.

Women's Issues

A.B. 499 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Encino)
Purpose: To systematize and strengthen the state Education Code, particularly as it relates to discrimination, including sex discrimination.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed and sent to the governor for signature or veto. In January Assemblymember Kuehl declared the bill dead because she did not have the votes for it in the Assembly. Lambda Letters then delivered 900 letters and messages in support of the bill and it passed the Assembly.

A. B. 1112 (Bob Hertzberg, D–Van Nuys)
Purpose: To require HMOs and insurance providers to cover the cost of prescription contraceptives. To get the governor's support, the bill has been amended to allow some employers, who have a religious objection to contraception, to provide for their employees group health plans that do not cover contraceptives. In these cases employees who earn up to 400 percent of the poverty level would be permitted to purchase health coverage that does cover prescription contraceptives from a state-funded family planning program.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed and sent to governor for signature or veto.

A.B. 2592 (Howard Wayne, D–San Diego)
Purpose: To use tobacco taxes to fund prevention and treatment of breast cancer, with special emphasis on low-income, Native American, and minority women.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for final vote in the Senate.

S.B. 487 (Hilda Solis, D–El Monte)
Purpose: To provide loans for the construction or rehabilitation of low-cost housing for people receiving welfare. The housing is to be near public transit, and have on-site child care and job training.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Scheduled for final vote in the Assembly.

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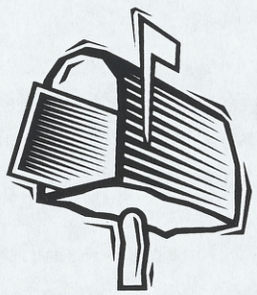

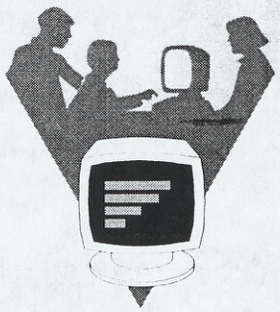

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Lambda Letters Central

Continued from page 1

(By the way, we could use more volunteers to help on this project. If you have Internet access and would like to help, send us an e-mail message at LambdaLP@aol.com.)

Volunteers are also hard at work creating a new scorecard of our state legislator's voting records during this legislative session. We hope to issue the scorecard soon after the close of the legislative session this fall. As a by-product of this project, we will probably also send each member an abbreviated scorecard showing the final scores of each legislator. These may help you in deciding whom to vote for in this fall's election.

This year, Lambda Letters will be sponsoring a lavender film event the day after the end of the Sacramento Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. We plan to show two wonderful films that evening, as well as make a party of the evening with food, a raffle, and the auction of some wonderful items. One of our great items to be raffled is two tickets to either *Miss Saigon* or *Phantom of the Opera* in San Francisco. This will be a fund-raiser for Lambda Letters and a way to celebrate and encourage the many talented filmmakers in our community. A committee of volunteers has begun the preparations for this happy event.

Finally, we are fast at work creating a 1999 calendar for sale. This calendar will be totally different than the ones that have been offered in the past. It will be called "Broken Chains," and will celebrate twelve of the giants of our community this century, whose efforts have done so much to make us free. The cover of the calendar is being designed by a professional graphic arts company, ART101. We are excited by the new calendar and hope you will support Lambda Letters by buying them for yourselves and for your friends and family. They will go on sale later this year.

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Our Place in History
Continued from page 1

molested children in their care. Do you think these people should decide what our morals should be?

At present, roughly 50–60 percent of straight marriages end in divorce. Perhaps because of that fact, many straight couples are choosing to live together without the benefit of marriage. Also, straight parents (mainly fathers) are abandoning their children in droves. According to the *1997 Information Please Almanac,* only half of those parents entitled to child support receive all that they are entitled to, and a third of them receive no child support at all.

By contrast, non-straights are struggling to assert their right to marry and to accept all the obligations of that condition. Yet politicians and religious leaders are battling us every step of the way.

Not only are many states passing laws specifically banning the recognition of same-sex marriages, but a recent convocation of the world's Anglican bishops approved a resolution that opposes the blessings of same-sex unions by Anglican priests. The United Methodist Church's Judicial Council also warned that Methodist ministers may be defrocked for blessing such unions.

What does all this say to us?

First of all, this nation is desperately in need of a moral rudder. The traditional sources of moral leadership have abandoned ship. By contrast, many lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people have learned the lesson that, in fact, love is the greatest of virtues. We know that love is the fundamental building block both of a healthy family and a healthy society. We have been applying that knowledge to our relationships and it has guided our great outpouring of support for people with AIDS, children in need of our care, and in many other ways.

I think we can and should assert our claim to moral leadership. Our community and our nation needs us to do so. It's pretty clear what is good and what is shabby in our society. We need to think deeply about the wonderful values that are the foundation of all that is precious to us. We need to find ways to express these fundamental values in ways that the rest of society can understand. Such an exercise can be a healing process to straight society and a means of finally gaining our rightful place in this nation.

—Boyce Hinman,
Administrator

Good News and Bad News from Congress

The good news is that in early August the opponents of President Clinton's executive order banning sexual orientation discrimination in the federal government failed to overturn that order. Representative Joel Hefley (R–Colo.) tried to add an amendment overturning Clinton's executive order to the appropriations bill for the U.S. Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State. However, Hefley's amendment was defeated by a vote of 252 to 176.

The bad news is that the homophobes and conservatives in Congress won on three other points. Earlier this summer the House of Representatives passed legislation, introduced by Representative Frank Riggs (R–Calif.), that would withhold millions of dollars in housing funds from the city of San Francisco if it persists in requiring employers who contract with the city to provide domestic partner health insurance for their employees.

On August 7th two bad amendments to the appropriations bill were approved by the House of Representatives. One, introduced by Representative Steve Largent (R–Okla.), would prohibit joint adoptions of children by unmarried couples. The Largent Amendment passed on a vote of 227–192.

Another amendment, introduced by Representative Todd Tiahrt (R–Kan.) would prohibit the use of federal or Washington DC funds for clean needle exchange programs.

Each of these amendments have to be passed also by the Senate before they can become law, and their fate in the Senate is uncertain. However, we obviously have a lot of work to do to improve the voting record of our legislators in Washington.

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How High Can We Go?

In 1997 Lambda Letters sent a little over 47,000 letters and e-mail messages to elected officials on the issues that we care about. That was actually about 1,000 fewer pieces of mail than in 1996.

In the beginning of 1998 we decided to experiment with e-mail alerts in a big way by setting a goal of delivering at least 60,000 letters and e-mail messages by year's end. Things went so well that we had to raise that goal several times during the year because we kept meeting it! Now it appears we will certainly exceed 100,000 for the year. By the end of July we had collected over 91,000 mail pieces and we collected almost 28,000 in that month alone. This means that in July we collected over half as many letters and e-mail messages as we collected in all of 1997.

There is another measure of our success. We have begun to receive reports that fundamentalist Christian and other conservative groups are talking about—and warning against—Lambda Letters! That bad news for them is actually quite good news for us. It means we must be making an impact.

Appropriations Bill Passes

Continued from page 3

increase authorized by the VA/HUD committee is critical to people with HIV/AIDS.

Because the Senate version of the VA/HUD Appropriations bill does not include these drastic provisions, a conference committee (comprised of members of the House and Senate VA/HUD appropriations subcommittees) will reconsider both amendments later this year. During this conference process, it will be critical for House members, in particular, to urge conferees to recede to the Senate version of the bill.

Please read and sign the enclosed letter, or compose one of your own if you wish.

Lambda Letters is alive and well and we are having a beneficial effect on the welfare of our community. We hope that you will continue to support us with your letters, your donations, and your volunteer help so that we can continue to be a force for good.

the news resource of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community

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The staff and management of Outword Newsmagazine fully supports the work and goals of Lambda Letters Project and offers its profound gratitude to the volunteers and staff for making those goals a reality.

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